

The Prince of Peace.

Famous Lecture Delivered by William Jennings Bryan at Numerous Chautauques and Y. M. C. A.'s, and at Tokyo, Manila, Bombay, Cairo, Jerusalem.

I offer no apology for speaking upon a religious theme, for it is the most universal of all themes. If I addressed you upon the subject of law I might interest the lawyers. If I discussed the science of medicine I might interest the physicians. In like manner merchants might be interested in a talk on commerce and farmers in a discussion of agriculture. But none of these subjects appeals to all. Even the science of government, though broader than any profession or occupation, does not embrace the whole sum of life, and those who think upon it differ so among themselves that I could not speak upon the subject so as to please a part without offending others. While to me the science of government is intensely absorbing, I recognize that the most important things in life lie outside of the realm of government and that more depends upon what the individual does for himself than upon what the government does or can do for him. Men can be miserable under the best government, and they can be happy under the worst government.

Government affects but a part of the life which we live here and does not touch at all the life beyond, where a religion touches the infinite circle of existence as well as the small arc of that circle which we spend on earth. No greater theme, therefore, can engage our attention.

Man is a religious being. The heart instinctively seeks for a God. Man is essentially devout.

There are honest doubters whose sincerity we recognize and respect, but occasionally I find young men who think it smart to be skeptical. They talk as if it were an evidence of larger intelligence to scoff at creeds and refuse to connect themselves with churches. They call themselves "liberal," as if a Christian were narrow minded. To these young men I desire to address myself.

Religion the Basis of Morality.

Even some older people profess to regard religion as a superstition, pardonable in the ignorant, but unworthy of the educated, a mental state which one can and should outgrow. Those who hold this view look down with mild contempt upon such as give to religion a definite place in their thoughts and lives. They assume an intellectual superiority and often take little pains to conceal the assumption.

Religion has been defined as the relation which man fixes between himself and his God and morality as the outward manifestation of this relation. Every one by the time he reaches maturity has fixed some relation between himself and God, and no material change in this relation can take place without a revolution in the man, for this relation is the most potent influence that acts upon a human life.

Religion is the basis of morality in the individual and in the group of individuals. Materialists have attempted to build up a system of morality upon the basis of enlightened self interest. They would have man figure out by mathematics that it pays him to abstain from wrongdoing; they would even inject an element of selfishness into altruism. But the moral system elaborated by the materialists has general defects. First, its virtues are borrowed from moral systems based upon religion. Second, as it rests upon argument rather than upon authority it does not appeal to the young, and by the time the young are able to follow their reason they have already become set in their ways. Our laws do not permit a young man to dispose of real estate until he is twenty-one. Why this restraint? Because his reason is not mature. And yet a man's life is largely molded by the environment of his youth. Third, one never knows just how much of his decision is due to reason and how much is due to passion or to selfish interest. We recognize the bias of self interest when we exclude from the jury every man, no matter how reasonable or upright he may be, who has a pecuniary interest in the result of the trial. And, fourth, one whose morality is based upon a nice calculation of benefits to be secured spends time figuring that he should spend in action.

Morality is the power of endurance in man, and a religion which teaches personal responsibility to God gives strength to morality. There is a powerful restraining influence in the belief that an all seeing eye scrutinizes every thought and word and act of the individual.

There are difficulties to be encountered in religion, but there are difficulties to be encountered everywhere. I passed through a period of skepticism when I was in college, and I have been glad ever since that I became a member of the church before I left home for college, for it helped me during those trying days. The college days cover the dangerous period in the young man's life. It is when he is just coming into possession of his powers, when he feels stronger than he ever feels afterward and thinks he knows more than he ever does know.

It was at this period that I was confused by the different theories of creation. But I examined these theories and found that they all assumed something to begin with. The nebular hypothesis, for instance, assumes that matter and force existed, matter in particles infinitely fine and each particle separated from every other particle by space infinitely great. Beginning with this assumption, force working on matter, according to this hypothesis, creates a universe. Well, I have a right to assume and I prefer to assume a Designer back of the design, a Creator back of creation, and no matter how long you draw out the process of creation, so long as God stands back of it you cannot shake my faith in Jehovah. In Genesis it is written that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and I can stand on that proposition until I find some theory of creation that goes further back than "the beginning."

I do not carry the doctrine of evolution as far as some do. I have not yet been able to convince myself that man is a third descendant of the lower animals. I do not mean to find fault with you if you want to accept it. All I mean to say is that, while you may trace your ancestry back to the monkey if you find pleasure or pride in doing so, you shall not connect me with your family tree without more evidence than has yet been produced. It is true that man in some physical qualities resembles the beast, but man has a mind as well as a body and a soul as well as a mind. The mind is greater than the body, and the soul is greater than the mind, and I object to having man's pedigree traced on one-third of him only, and that the lowest third.

One does not escape from mystery, however, by accepting this theory, for it does not explain the origin of life. When the follower of Darwin has traced the germ of life back to the lowest form in which it appears, and to follow him one must exercise more faith than religion calls for, he finds that scientists differ. Some believe that the first germ of life came from another planet, and others hold that it was the result of spontaneous generation.

If I were compelled to accept one of these theories I would prefer the first, for if we can chase the germ of life off this planet and get it out into space we can guess the rest of the way and no one can contradict us, but if we accept the doctrine of spontaneous generation we cannot explain why spontaneous generation ceased to act after the first germ was created.

Go back as far as we may, we cannot escape from the creative act, and it is just as easy for me to believe that God created man as he is as to believe that millions of years ago he created a germ of life and endowed it with power to develop into all that we see today. But I object to the Darwinian theory until more conclusive proof is produced, because I fear we shall lose the consciousness of God's presence in our daily life if we must assume that through all the ages no spiritual force has touched the life of man or shaped the destiny of nations. But there is another objection. The Darwinian theory represents man as reaching his present perfection by the operation of the law of the struggle for existence, by which the strong crowd out and kill off the weak. If this is the law of our development, then, if there is any logic that can bind the human mind, we shall turn backward toward the beast in proportion as we substitute the law of love. How can hatred be the law of development when nations have advanced in proportion as they have departed from that law and adopted the law of love?

But while I do not accept the Darwinian theory I shall not quarrel with you about it. I refer to it only to remind you that it does not solve the mystery of life or explain human progress. I fear that some have accepted it in the hope of escaping from the miracle, but why should the miracle frighten us? It bothered me once, and I am inclined to think that it is one of the best questions with the Christian.

Why Shouldn't Miracles Be Performed?

Christ cannot be separated from the miraculous. His birth, his ministrations and his resurrection all involve the miraculous, and the change which his religion works in the human heart is a continuing miracle. Eliminate the miracles and Christ becomes merely a human being and his gospel is stripped of divine authority.

The miracle raises two questions, "Can God perform a miracle?" and "Would he want to?" The first is easy to answer. A God who can make a world can do anything he wants to do with it. The power to perform miracles is necessarily implied in the power to create. But would God want to perform a miracle? This is the question which has given most of the trouble. The more I have considered it the less inclined I am to answer in the negative. To say that God would not perform a miracle is to assume a more intimate knowledge of God's plans and purposes than I can claim to have. I will not deny that God does perform a miracle or may perform one merely because I do not know how or why he does it. The fact that we are constantly learning of the existence of new forces suggests the possibility that God may operate through forces yet unknown to us, and the mysteries which we deal every day warn me that faith is as necessary as sight.

Who would have credited a century ago the stories that are now told of the wonder working electricity? For ages man had known the lightning, but only to fear it. Now this invisible current is generated by a man made machine, impounded in a man made wire and made to do the bidding of man. The miracle is not more mysterious than many of the things with

which man now deals. It is simply different.

It is sometimes said that God could not suspend one of his laws without stopping the universe, but do we not suspend or overcome the law of gravitation every day? Every time we move a foot or lift a weight we temporarily interfere with the operation of the most universal of natural laws, and yet the world is not disturbed.

Science has taught us so many things that we are tempted to conclude that we know everything, but there is really a great unknown which is still unexplored, and that which we have learned ought to increase our reverence rather than our egotism.

Science has disclosed some of the machinery of the universe, but science has not yet revealed to us the great secret—the secret of life. It is to be found in every blade of grass, in every insect, in every bird and in every animal, as well as in man. Six thousand years of recorded history, and yet we know no more about the secret of life than they knew in the beginning. We live, we plan, we have our hopes, our fears, and yet in a moment a change may come over any one of us, and this body will become a mass of lifeless clay. What is it that, having, we live and, having not, we are as the dead? We know not, yet the progress of the race and the civilization which we now behold are the work of men and women who have not solved the mystery of their own lives.

And our food—must we understand it before we eat it? If we refused to eat anything until we could understand the mystery of its growth, we would die of starvation. But mystery does not bother us in the dining room. Only in the church is it an obstacle.

I was eating a piece of watermelon some months ago and was struck with its beauty. I took some of the seed and dried them and weighed them and found that it would require some five thousand seeds to weigh a pound. And then I applied mathematics to that forty pound melon. One of these seeds put into the ground when warmed by the sun and moistened by the rain goes to work. It gathers from somewhere two hundred thousand times its own weight and, forcing this raw material through a tiny stem, constructs a watermelon. It covers the outside with a coating of green, inside of the green it puts a layer of white, and within the white a core of red, and all through the red it scatters seeds, each one capable of continuing the work of reproduction. Where did that little seed get its tremendous power? How did it find its coloring matter? How did it collect its flavoring extract? How did it build a watermelon? Until you can explain a watermelon do not be too sure that you can set limits to the power of the Almighty or say just what he would do or how he would do it. I cannot explain the watermelon, but I eat it and enjoy it.

Power That Is Infinite and Divine.

Everything that grows tells a like story of infinite power. Why should I deny that a divine hand fed a multitude with a few loaves and fishes when I see hundreds of millions fed every year by a hand which converts the seeds scattered over the field into an abundant harvest? We know that food can be multiplied in a few months' time. Shall we deny the power of the Creator to eliminate the element of time when we have gone so far in eliminating the element of space?

But there is something even more wonderful still, the mysterious change that takes place in the human heart when the man begins to hate the things he loved and to love the things he hated, the marvelous transformation that takes place in the man who before the change would have sacrificed the world for his own advancement, but who after the change would give his life for a principle and esteem it a privilege to make sacrifice for his convictions. What greater miracle than this that converts a selfish, self centered human being into a center from which good influences flow out in every direction? And yet this miracle has been wrought in the heart of each one of us, it may be wrought, and we have seen it wrought in the hearts of those about us. No living in the midst of mystery and miracles, I shall not allow either to deprive me of the benefits of the Christian religion.

Some of those who question the miracle also question the theory of atonement. They assert that it does not accord with their idea of justice for one to die for others. Let each one bear his own sins and the punishments due for them, they say. The doctrine of vicarious suffering is not a new one. It is as old as the race. That one should suffer for others is one of the most familiar of principles, and we see the principle illustrated every day of our lives.

I find proof that man was made in the image of his Creator in the fact that throughout the centuries man has been willing to die that blessings denied to him might be enjoyed by his children, his children's children and the world.

The seeming paradox, "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it," has an application wider than that usually given to it. It is an epitome of history. Those who live only for themselves live little lives, but those who give themselves for the advancement of things greater than themselves find a larger life than the one surrendered.

Instead of being an unnatural plan, the plan of salvation is in perfect harmony with human nature as we understand it. Sacrifice is the language of love, and Christ in suffering for the world adopted the only means of reaching the heart, and this can be demonstrated not only by theory, but by experience, for the story of his life, his teachings, his sufferings and his death has been translated into every

language, and everywhere it has touched the heart.

But if I were going to present an argument in favor of the divinity of Christ I would not begin with miracles or mystery or theory of atonement. I would begin with the fact that Christ lived. Christ presents an example of purity in thought and life, and man, conscious of his own imperfections and grieved over his shortcomings, finds inspiration in one who was tempted in all points just as we are and yet was without sin.

Christ as an Example of Humility.

Humility is a rare virtue. If one is rich he is apt to be proud of his riches. If he has distinguished ancestry he is apt to be proud of his lineage. If he is well educated he is apt to be proud of his learning. Some one has suggested that if one becomes humble he soon becomes proud of his humility. Christ, however, possessed of all power, was the very personification of humility.

The most difficult of all the virtues to cultivate is the forgiving spirit. Revenge seems to be natural to the human heart. To want to get even with an enemy is a common sin. It has even been popular to boast of vindictiveness. It was once inscribed on a monument to a hero that he had repaid both friends and enemies more than he had received. This was not the spirit of Christ. He taught forgiveness, and in that incomparable prayer which he left as a model for our petitions he made our willingness to forgive the measure by which we may claim forgiveness. He not only taught forgiveness, but he exemplified his teachings in his life. When those who persecuted him brought him to the most disgraceful of all deaths his spirit of forgiveness rose above his sufferings, and he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

What conclusion is to be drawn from the life, the teachings and the death of this historic figure? Reared in a carpenter's shop, with no knowledge of literature save Bible literature, with no acquaintance with philosophers living or with the writings of sages dead, this young man gathered disciples about him, promulgated a higher code of morals than the world had ever known before and proclaimed himself the Messiah. He taught and performed miracles for a few brief months and then was crucified. His disciples were scattered and many of them put to death. His claims were disputed, his resurrection denied and his followers persecuted, and yet from this beginning his religion has spread until millions take his name with reverence upon their lips and thousands have been willing to die rather than surrender the faith which he put into their hearts. How shall we account for this? "What think ye of Christ?" It is easier to believe him divine than to explain in any other way what he said and did and was.

I have selected this theme that I may present some of the reasons which lead me to believe that Christ has fully earned the title the Prince of Peace and that in the years to come it will be more and more applied to him. Faith in him brings peace to the heart, faith in his teachings when applied will bring peace between man and man, and if he can bring peace to each heart and if his creed will bring peace throughout the earth who will deny his right to be called the Prince of Peace?

All the world is in search of peace. Every heart that ever has sought for peace, and every heart has been the methods employed to secure it. Some have thought to purchase it with riches, and they have labored to secure wealth, hoping to find peace when they were able to go where they pleased and buy what they liked. Of those who have endeavored to purchase peace with money the large majority have failed to secure the money. But what has been the experience of those who have been successful in accumulating money? They all tell the same story—viz, that they spent the first half of their lives trying to get money from others and the last half trying to keep others from getting their money and that they found peace in neither half. Some have even reached the point where they find difficulty in getting people to accept their money, and I know of no better indication of the ethical awakening in this country than the increasing tendency to scrutinize the methods of money making.

A long step in advance will have been taken when religions, educational and charitable institutions refuse to condone immoral methods in business and leave the possessor of ill gotten gains to learn the loneliness of life when one prefers money to morals.

Some have sought peace in social distinction; but, whether they have been within the charmed circle and fearful lest they might fall out or outside and hopeful that they might get in, they have not found peace.

Some have thought—vain thought!—to find peace in political prominence; but, whether office comes by birth, as in monarchies, or by election, as in republics, it does not bring peace. An office is conspicuous only when few can occupy it. Only when few in a generation can hope to enjoy an honor do we call it a great honor. I am glad that our Heavenly Father did not make the peace of the human heart depend upon the accumulation of wealth or upon the securing of social or political distinction, for in either case but few could have enjoyed it, but when he made peace the reward of a conscience void of offense toward God and man he put it within the reach of all. The poor can secure it as easily as the rich, the social outcast as freely as the leader of society and the humblest citizen equally with those who wield political power.

Christ promoted peace by giving us assurance that a line of communication

can be established between the Father above and the child below. And who will measure the consolation that has been brought to troubled hearts by the hour of prayer?

Proof of Immortality.

And immortality! Who will estimate the peace which a belief in a future life has brought to the sorrowing? You may talk to the young about death ending all, for life is full, and hope is strong, but preach not this doctrine to the mother who stands by the deathbed of her babe or to one who is within the shadow of a great affliction.

Christ gave us proof of immortality, and yet it would hardly seem necessary that one should rise from the dead to convince us that the grave is not the end. To every created thing God has given a tongue that proclaims a resurrection.

If the Father deigns to touch with divine power the cold and pulseless heart of the buried acorn and to make it burst forth from its prison walls, will he leave neglected in the earth the soul of man, made in the image of his Creator? If he stoops to give to the rose-bush whose withered blossoms float upon the autumn breeze the sweet assurance of another springtime, will he refuse the words of hope to the sons of men when the frosts of winter come? If matter mute and inanimate, though changed by the forces of nature into a multitude of forms, can never die, will the spirit of man suffer annihilation when it has paid a brief visit like a royal guest to this tenement of clay? No; I am sure that there is another life as I am that I live today.

In Cairo I secured a few grains of wheat that had slumbered for more than three thousand years in an Egyptian tomb. As I looked at them I thought came into my mind: If one of those grains had been planted on the banks of the Nile the year after it grew and all its lineal descendants planted and replanted from that time until now, its progeny would today be sufficiently numerous to feed the teeming millions of the world. If this invisible germ of life in the grain of wheat can thus pass unimpaired through three thousand resurrections, I shall not doubt that my soul has power to clothe itself with a body suited to its new existence when this earthly frame has crumbled into dust.

A belief in immortality not only consoles the individual, but it exerts a powerful influence in bringing peace between individuals. If one really thinks that man dies as the brute dies, he may yield to the temptation to do injustice to his neighbor when the circumstances are such as to promise security from detection. But if one really expects to meet again and live eternally with those whom he knows today he is restrained from evil deeds by the fear of endless remorse.

Again, Christ deserves to be called the Prince of Peace because he has given us a measure of greatness which promotes peace. When his disciples disputed among themselves as to which should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he rebuked them and said, "Let him who would be chief among you be the servant of all." Service is the measure of greatness. It always has been true. It is true today and it always will be true that he is greatest who does the most of good. And yet what a revolution it will work in this old world when this standard becomes the standard of life! Nearly all of our controversies and combats arise from the fact that we are trying to get something from each other. There will be peace when our aim is to do something for each other. Our enmities and animosities arise from our efforts to get as much as possible out of the world. There will be peace when our endeavor is to put as much as possible into the world. Society will take an immeasurable step toward peace when it estimates a citizen by his output rather than by his income and gives the crown of its approval to the one who makes the largest contribution to the welfare of all.

Christ has also led the way to peace by giving us a formula for the propagation of good. Not all of those who have really desired to do good have employed the Christian method—not all Christians even. In all the history of the human race but two methods have been employed.

The first is the forcible method. The other is the Bible plan—be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. And there is no other way of overcoming evil. I am not much of a farmer, I get more credit for my farming than I deserve, and my little farm receives more advertising than it is entitled to. But I am farmer enough to know that if I cut down weeds they will spring up again, and I know that if I plant something there which has more vitality than the weeds I shall not only get rid of the constant cutting, but have the benefit of the crop besides.

In order that there might be no mistake about his plan of propagating good Christ went into detail and laid emphasis upon the value of example—"So live that others seeing your good works may be constrained to glorify your Father which is in heaven." There is no human influence so potent for good as that which goes out from an upright life.

The World's Only Hope.

It may be a slow process, this conversion of the world by the silent influence of a noble example, but it is the only sure one, and the doctrine applies to nations as well as to individuals. The gospel of the Prince of Peace gives us the only hope that the world has, and it is an increasing hope, of the substitution of reason for the arbitrament of force in the settlement of international disputes.

But Christ has given us a platform more fundamental than any political party, more far-reaching and more comprehensive than any platform ever

written by the convention of any party in any country. When he condensed into one commandment those of the ten which relate of man's duty toward his fellows and enjoined upon us the rule "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" he presented a plan for the solution of all the problems that now vex society or may hereafter arise. Other remedies may palliate or postpone the day of settlement, but this is all sufficient, and the reconciliation which it effects is a permanent one.

If I were to attempt to apply this thought to various questions which are at issue, I might be accused of entering the domain of partisan politics, but I may safely apply it to two great problems. First let us consider the question of capital and labor. This is not a transient issue or a local one. It engages the attention of the people of all countries and has appeared in every age. The immediate need in this country is arbitration, for neither side to the controversy can be trusted to deal with absolute justice if allowed undisputed control. But arbitration, like a court, is a last resort. It would be better if the relations between employer and employee were such as to make arbitration unnecessary. Just in proportion as men recognize their kinship to each other and deal with each other in the spirit of brotherhood will friendship and harmony be secured. Both employer and employee need to cultivate the spirit which follows from obedience to the great commandment.

Ethics of Money Making.

The second problem to which I would apply this platform of peace is that which relates to the accumulation of wealth. We cannot much longer delay consideration of the ethics of money making. That many of the enormous fortunes which have been accumulated in the last quarter of a century are now held by men who have given to society no adequate service in return for the money secured is now generally recognized. While legislation can and should protect the public from predatory wealth, a more effective remedy will be found in the cultivation of a public opinion which will substitute a higher ideal than the one which tolerates the enjoyment of unearned gains. No man who really knows what brotherly love is will desire to take advantage of his neighbor, and the conscience when not secured will admonish against injustice. My faith in the future rests upon the belief that Christ's teachings are being more studied today than ever before and that with this larger study will come an application of those teachings to the everyday life of the world. In former times men read that Christ came to bring life and immortality to light and placed the emphasis upon immortality; now they are studying Christ's relation to human life. In former years many thought to prepare themselves for future bliss by a life of seclusion here; now they are learning that they cannot follow in the footsteps of the Master unless they go about doing good. Christ declared that he came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. The world is learning that Christ came not to narrow life, but to enlarge it.

But this Prince of Peace promises not only peace, but strength. Some have thought his teachings fit only for the weak and the timid and unsuited to men of vigor, energy and ambition. Nothing could be further from the truth. Only the man of faith can be courageous. Confident that he fights on the side of Jehovah, he doubts not the success of his cause. What matters it whether he shares in the shouts of triumph? If every word spoken in behalf of truth has its influence and every deed done for the right weighs in the final account, it is immaterial to the Christian whether his eyes behold victory or whether he dies in the midst of the conflict.

Only those who believe attempt the seemingly impossible and by attempting prove that one with God can chase a thousand and two can put ten thousand to flight. I can imagine that the early Christians who were carried into the arena to make a spectacle for those more savage than the beasts were entreated by their doubting companions not to endanger their lives. But, kneeling in the center of the arena, they prayed and sang until they were exhausted. How helpless they seemed, and measured by every human rule, how hopeless was their cause! And yet within a few decades the power which they invoked proved mightier than the legions of the emperor, and the faith in which they died was triumphant over all that stood in their way. It is said that those who went to mock at their sufferings returned asking themselves, "What is it that can enter into the heart of man and make him die as these die?" They were greater conquerors in their death than they could have been had they purchased life by a surrender of their faith.

What would have been the fate of the church if the early Christians had had as little faith as many of our Christians now have? And, on the other hand, if the Christians of today had the faith of the martyrs, how long would it be before the fulfillment of the prophecy that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess?

Our faith should be even stronger than the faith of those who lived 2,000 years ago, for we see our religion spreading and supplanting the philosophies and creeds of the orient.

As the Christian grows older he appreciates more and more the completeness with which Christ fills the requirements of the heart, and grateful for the peace which he enjoys and for the strength which he has received, he repeats the words of the great scholar, Sir William Jones:

Before thy metric altar, heavenly truth, I bow in rapture as I kneel in youth. Thus let me kneel till this dust form decays. And life's last shade be brightened by thy rays.

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